

## Message

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**Sent:** 4/12/2017 2:49:14 PM  
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**Subject:** USS Lead - Press

**East Chicago press clips****US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs****April 12, 2017****NWI Times****WBAA****Flint activist to East Chicago residents: Keep fighting****EPA, East Chicago Remain In Gridlock Over West Calumet Plan**

[http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/flint-activist-to-east-chicago-residents-keep-fighting/article\\_bb26b371-8355-5f28-9578-3cf01c83b4d9.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/flint-activist-to-east-chicago-residents-keep-fighting/article_bb26b371-8355-5f28-9578-3cf01c83b4d9.html)

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- Apr 11, 2017 Updated 9 hrs ago

EAST CHICAGO — A mother and activist from Flint, Michigan who helped push in court for the replacement of the city's aging lead service lines encouraged residents in East Chicago living on contaminated soil — and drinking, in some cases, contaminated water — to keep fighting.

"There are victories. Big wins and little wins. It's a long battle that we've been in for quite some time," said Melissa Mays, a founder of Water You Fighting For, a grassroots organization borne of the Flint, Michigan's water crisis.

In recent weeks, the state of Michigan agreed to provide nearly \$100 million to replace Flint's lead service lines within three years, under a court settlement with residents.

"We've just had a big victory with the (National Resource Defense Council) to force the state to do the right thing," she said. "It's wonderful, but it's only one piece."

**Lead in the drinking water**

Her comments came during Tuesday night's panel discussion titled "Stand with Frontline Communities: Environmental Justice Now," held at the Ameristar Hotel and Casino in East Chicago. The Northwest Indiana event was part of a larger rally in protest of President Donald Trump that began earlier in the day in downtown Chicago.

Some of the panel speakers included Mays, local environmental activist Thomas Frank and a number of residents living in the USS Lead Superfund site among others.

Residents in the heavily industrialized East Chicago have been faced with a similar plight since last summer's discovery of dangerous high levels in the soil, and more recently, the drinking water.

Since that time, residents have rallied together in demanding local, state and federal officials provide water filters for the entire city, timely soil cleanup and indoor cleaning of homes in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's USS Lead Superfund site.

In December, the EPA announced elevated lead levels in the drinking water in some homes in East Chicago. The EPA has said it views the sampling to be representative of the entire water system.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management began distributing and installing water filters in homes in the Superfund site this week, months after the initial discovery by the EPA. Last month, the NRDC and nearly two dozen other groups petitioned the EPA to immediately provide, or order the city or state to provide, free water filters to the entire city.

The city of East Chicago is petitioning the state to hike its water rates to pay for much-needed infrastructure improvements. As part of that bid for higher rates, the city is also asking for funds to replace its lead service lines. The case is pending before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

East Chicago is not alone. A state report issued late last year estimated Indiana's aging water infrastructure needs \$2.3 billion in immediate repairs. The majority of the state's pipes were installed after World War II, while some are made of lead — potentially releasing chemicals into drinking water that can cause kidney damage, anemia, hypertension and abnormal brain development.

### **Joining together**

The USS Lead Superfund site was first designated by the EPA in 2009, but soil testing in the area began decades ago. Another lead smelter also once operated on the site of the public housing complex and the school.

In recent months, more than 200 families in the West Calumet Housing Complex have been uprooted from the HUD-funded housing complex due to dangerously high lead levels in the soil. Soil cleanup is ongoing in two other areas of the Calumet neighborhood.

Residents have also been faced with declining property values in Superfund site, along with heightened health problems, including higher rates of infant mortality.

In recent weeks, the Trump administration has proposed drastic cuts to the EPA, particularly climate change programs and initiatives aimed at protecting air, land and water quality, including erasing a \$300 million per-year program to clean up the Great Lakes.

The goal is to shift responsibility for environmental and health protections onto state and local governments. However, the impact of such cuts on ongoing Superfund site cleanup in East Chicago — paid for, in part, by both the EPA and the companies responsible for the pollution — is not entirely clear.

### **Build a movement**

Frank moved to East Chicago two decades ago, when he served as the director of the Indiana Harbor Shipping Canal and learned of the city's toxic history.

"It was one story after another of uncovering these toxic secrets that had been kind of laying just below the surface," Frank said. "So what I've learned from a lot of people in the Great Lakes Region, in Detroit, Kalamazoo, Flint, is that there's a pattern here, a pattern of abuse and corruption."

Frank said the communities in the Great Lakes region inherited this contamination.

"By us trying to knit our stories together, we can build a movement," Frank said.

He called on those in the audience to join him and other community groups April 19 in East Chicago, when EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and HUD Secretary Ben Carson plan to visit the USS Lead Superfund site. Residents have demanded a meeting.

<http://wbaa.org/post/epa-east-chicago-remain-gridlock-over-west-calumet-plan#stream/0>

## **EPA, East Chicago Remain In Gridlock Over West Calumet Plan**

By [Annie Ropeik](#) •

The Environmental Protection Agency and East Chicago's [mayor remain at a standstill over the future](#) of a lead-contaminated public housing complex.

After Mayor Anthony Copeland doubled down on his insistence that the EPA clean West Calumet Housing Complex to a residential standard, the EPA has maintained it can't move forward with cleanup until it gets more information from the city.

The EPA has different cleanup standards for different land uses, so it always planned to return the contaminated West Calumet Housing Complex to a residential standard.

But it made those plans before Mayor Anthony Copeland ordered the complex torn down last July.

Now, the EPA says it doesn't know for sure that the land will be used for housing. It wants a redevelopment plan from Copeland before it proceeds, and it's repeatedly asked him to write one.

But Copeland says he doesn't need to do so – because the EPA agreed to use a residential standard in its 2014 consent decree with the companies paying for the cleanup.

The EPA says that decree no longer applies to West Calumet. They've put that in writing, too, in letters to Indiana's Congressional delegation.

After Copeland held fast to his position in his state of the city speech last week, the EPA did the same in a statement to Indiana Public Broadcasting. The agency says it's revising a study of cleanup options for the site, which comprises Zone 1 of the EPA's USS Lead Superfund site, but that it can't start working without a future use plan.

"[G]iven EPA's current uncertainty about future land use in Zone 1, the agency is proceeding with an addendum to its Feasibility Study to evaluate cleanup alternatives and estimate costs for various scenarios," an EPA spokesperson wrote in an email. "However, EPA cannot select a new remedy for Zone 1 until the City and the East Chicago Housing Authority makes its decision about the future of Zone 1."

City officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Meanwhile, the EPA is cleaning up soil in other parts of the Superfund. It did clean the inside of some West Calumet homes last fall, but hasn't done much remediation since.

About 50 families are still trying to move out of the complex, after their official deadline to do so came and went earlier this month.

Hearings will take place next week for families who don't want to move to temporary housing units they assigned in East Chicago, Gary and Chicago.

Sincerely,

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